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EXCHANGING BUSINESS CARDS AS A MAIN ELEMENT OF BUSINESS MEETING

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The topic of business etiquette gained actuality long ago. And research in this area is still continuing. Exchanging business cards between foreign partners is considered to be the main element of business meeting. Understanding business cards etiquette allows you to feel comfortable dealing with foreign friends, colleagues, customers or clients. Knowing what to do and what to say in particular places will help to build trustful and open lines of communication.

All over the world business cards have very different meanings. And there are different rules how to exchange business cards with foreign partners. If you don't follow these rules it can and does lead to misunderstanding, lost deals and in the end poor business results. That is why this topic has constant actuality.

So we'll try to single out the most general rules and statements accepted in different countries. First of all it should be mentioned that business cards are an internationally recognized means of presenting personal contact details and when travelling abroad on business it is advisable to have one side of business card translated into the appropriate language. Business cards are generally exchanged at the beginning of or at the end of an initial meeting. Foreign colleagues must have some time for studying any business card, commenting on it and clarifying information before putting it away. So these are the most general rules, but throughout the world people from different cultures have varying etiquette rules around such area as business cards [5].

There are certain pieces of advice business partners should know before handing out business cards to Chinese partners. They should have one side of a business card translated into Chinese using simplified Chinese characters. If a partner’s company is the oldest or the largest in his country, that fact should be highlighted on the card. Before asking for somebody’s business card, it would be more polite to present your own card.

When a business card is offered it is advisable to study it before putting it into a rolodex and when business colleagues offer a card they should hold it out with both hands with the text facing the other party. It is considered to be very impolite to write on someone's business card. It can happen to be a great idea to use gold color in the design of business cards, because this color symbolizes luck, and it can subconsciously make the Chinese believe in the success of the business [2].

Business Card Etiquette in India has it own features. When presenting personal business cards in India a partner should remember to hand it over by his right hand and mention any accomplishments notable and university degrees. It isn’t necessary to translate business cards into Hindi as English is widely spoken within the business community [3].

In Japan business cards are called meishi and some rules are the same as in China, but there are some differences. It is almost an obligation for every person to possess meishi since he has graduated. It should be noted that they are an undividable part of business culture. Business cards are always received with two hands but can be given with only one. During a meeting business partner should place business cards on the table in front of him in the order people are seated. According to Japanese etiquette a business card should be offered to an individual of the highest rank first and then to other persons. It is impolite when the accepted business card is not taken away in the right time, so putting it into a wallet or a card case is very important. Having handed over colleague’s card, he should bow and introduce himself, because bowing is more preferable than handshake when dealing with foreigners [4].

It the United Kingdom the exchange of business cards is rather informal practice, which does not require a great deal of preliminaries. For instance, a businessperson can place an offered business card into his pocket, which is unacceptable in many other countries. However he should bear in mind that the exchange should correspond to the terms of appropriateness and necessity. As a rule free business cards are not used in personal situations [5].

According to Korean etiquette a business card should be received or presented with both hands outstretched. Receiving a business card from a Korean businessman the other partner should nod his head, express his gratitude and in a few seconds put the card away into his card case. He shouldn’t study received professional business card for too long, it is considered to be very rude [6].

Although in the U.S.A. business card etiquette isn’t as strict as in Asian countries business persons should be aware of some important aspects of it. Here are the tips that can help to avoid awkward situations and produce positive impression:

– wait for a request for business card from a person of higher rank.
– choose the best moment to act.
– say “thank you” and present your card in return when a partner’s business card is offered.

Before formal meetings it is a common practice to exchange business cards with all businessmen taking part in the meeting. This ensures that everyone in the room knows each other’s names and can result in better cooperation.

The U.S.A. business card etiquette in comparison with the etiquette of many other countries does not restrict businessman in everything connected with writing on business cards. Colleagues can write some important information on a business card such as cell phone number or email address and this on the can add some extra value to this card [7].

Typically in all countries a business card includes the name of the person, the company name, a company logo if applicable, and the relevant contact information (street address, postal coding, country, telephone and fax numbers, and email addresses). Traditionally black ink is used on white card stock. The typeface should be legible and professional. The international standard for card size is 85.60 x 53.98 mm [8].

In conclusion it should be said that one of the greatest mistakes you can make as an international business traveler is to assume that your manners will be regarded as good behavior in another country. Something as simple as presenting a business card incorrectly can set a poor tone for an entire meeting or a trip.

Knowing how to behave and what to say (and not to say) are vital business skills, because business of the firm may depend on it.

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